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FROM APPRECIATION TO DISSATISFACTION: EXPLAINING VISITOR EVALUATIONS THROUGH ONLINE REVIEWS OF A CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS HERITAGE DESTINATION

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Abstract
Online reviews provide destination managers with unsolicited accounts of service encounters, place meanings, and perceived value. Yet aggregate ratings can conceal the mechanisms through which visitors move from appreciation to dissatisfaction, particularly at heritage destinations that combine sacred, historical, and recreational functions. This study examines visitor evaluations of Pura Agung (Taman) Narmada, Lombok, through 207 TripAdvisor reviews reported in the source manuscript. The study adopts an interpretive netnographic orientation and combines qualitative content analysis with inductive thematic analysis. The reported rating distribution comprises 35 five-star, 81 four-star, 75 three-star, 11 two-star, and five one-star reviews, with a reported mean rating of 3.6. Across rating groups, six interconnected dimensions structure visitor accounts: cultural, historical, and spiritual meaning; physical environment and aesthetics; supporting facilities and attractions; destination management and governance; social interaction and service; and emotional-evaluative responses. The synthesis indicates that heritage significance and landscape aesthetics function as core sources of appreciation, but they do not compensate consistently for weaknesses in maintenance, interpretation, service standardisation, pricing transparency, and the management of interactions. The article contributes to experience-oriented destination management by showing how intrinsic heritage value and operational delivery jointly shape online evaluations. For managers, the findings support an integrated approach that protects sacred meanings while improving cleanliness, interpretation, accessibility, service protocols, and the coherence of recreational facilities. The findings are interpretive and platform-specific; they should not be treated as representative estimates of all visitors.

Keywords: online reviews; visitor experience; heritage destination management; netnography; electronic word of mouth; TripAdvisor

Introduction

Digital platforms have altered how tourism services are evaluated. Before a visit, prospective tourists use peer-generated accounts to reduce uncertainty about an experience that is intangible, heterogeneous, and consumed in situ. After a visit, they may publish narratives that communicate satisfaction, disappointment, and recommendations to other consumers. Online reviews therefore operate simultaneously as consumer information, electronic word of mouth (eWOM), and a source

of diagnostic information for service providers (Litvin et al., 2008; Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Filieri & McLeay, 2014). In tourism, where the product is often inseparable from the destination environment and service encounter, review narratives can reveal details that aggregate satisfaction scores do not capture.

This diagnostic function is particularly relevant to cultural and religious heritage destinations. Their value is not limited to built facilities or recreational amenities: visitors may seek historical learning, authenticity, spiritual meaning, aesthetic pleasure, social connection, and relaxation. These dimensions can coexist with practical expectations concerning cleanliness, access, information, price fairness, and service quality. Research on heritage experience has identified authenticity, cultural value, guides, local hospitality, and awe as important components of visitor evaluations (Gursoy et al., 2022; Park et al., 2019; Seyfi et al., 2020). At the same time, the experience-economy perspective suggests that destinations compete not only by providing services but by staging coherent and memorable experiences (Pine & Gilmore, 1998).

Pura Agung Narmada, commonly known as Taman Narmada, is a heritage landscape in Lombok that combines historical, religious, and recreational functions. This multifunctionality creates a management challenge: the site must maintain its cultural and spiritual significance while accommodating visitors with different motivations and expectations. The source dataset reports 207 TripAdvisor reviews and an overall mean rating of 3.6. The distribution is concentrated in the middle-to-positive range, but the coexistence of high and low evaluations indicates that a single score cannot adequately explain what visitors value or what they regard as service failures.

Prior studies have used online reviews to investigate destination image, heritage experience, and tourist satisfaction (Baniya et al., 2021; Gursoy et al., 2022; Olorunsola et al., 2023; Stoleriu et al., 2019). Nevertheless, a useful managerial question remains: how do intrinsic heritage attributes interact with operational and social conditions to produce different evaluative outcomes? Research on memorable tourism experience has also tended to privilege positive memories, leaving negative and ambivalent experiences comparatively underexamined (Hosany et al., 2022). This study addresses that gap by comparing narratives across rating categories rather than treating the average rating as a sufficient representation of experience.

The study asks: What experiential dimensions appear in TripAdvisor reviews of Taman Narmada, and how do these dimensions explain positive, ambivalent, and negative visitor evaluations? The article makes two contributions. First, it develops a cross-rating account of visitor experience in a destination where sacred heritage and recreational use coexist. Second, it translates review narratives into a management diagnosis that distinguishes core heritage assets from operational conditions that enable or undermine their experiential value.

Theoretical Framework

Visitor experience and the experience economy

Visitor experience is multidimensional. It may involve cognitive learning, affective responses, sensory engagement, social interaction, and spiritual or existential meaning. The experience-economy perspective argues that organisations create value by staging experiences that are memorable rather than merely delivering functional services (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). In tourism, memorability has been associated with hedonism, novelty, local culture, refreshment, meaningfulness, involvement, and knowledge (Kim et al., 2012). These dimensions are relevant

to heritage destinations because visitors may evaluate both what they learn about a place and how they feel while inhabiting it.

Heritage experiences are also shaped by authenticity. Authenticity is not simply a property of an artefact or building; it can be constructed through interpretation and experienced through visitors' engagement with a place. Research has linked perceived and existential authenticity with satisfaction and loyalty in heritage settings (Park et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2018). The implication is that heritage assets need to be interpreted and managed in ways that allow visitors to understand their significance without compromising the integrity of the site.

Service delivery, satisfaction, and dissatisfaction

A destination experience is produced through the interaction of core attractions and supporting services. The servicescape perspective emphasises that physical surroundings influence users' responses and behaviours (Bitner, 1992). In a heritage setting, cleanliness, wayfinding, toilets, resting spaces, accessibility, visitor flow, and the conduct of service providers form part of the environment in which cultural meaning is encountered. Service quality research further suggests that consumers evaluate service through multiple dimensions, including reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

Satisfaction and dissatisfaction should not be treated as exact opposites. Herzberg et al.'s (1959) distinction between factors that create satisfaction and those that prevent dissatisfaction offers a useful sensitising concept, although it should not be transferred mechanically from workplace motivation to tourism. In destination management, compelling heritage values may generate appreciation, while poor cleanliness, confusing fees, intrusive selling, or inadequate information may independently generate dissatisfaction. This helps explain why a visitor may acknowledge a site's beauty yet still assign a moderate or low rating.

Online reviews as consumer-generated diagnostic data

Online reviews are public narratives produced by consumers after service consumption. They influence prospective customers and can affect organisational reputation and demand (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Litvin et al., 2008). Their value for management lies not only in star ratings but also in the textual explanations accompanying those ratings. Review valence, volume, credibility, and content can influence consumer decisions (Filieri & McLeay, 2014; Qiu & Zhang, 2024). However, reviewers are self-selecting platform users, so online reviews should be interpreted as situated accounts rather than as a representative survey of all visitors.

Analytical framing

The study uses an integrative analytical framing rather than testing a causal model. Visitor evaluations are interpreted as emerging from the interaction of (a) heritage meaning and authenticity, (b) physical and aesthetic conditions, (c) supporting facilities, (d) destination governance, and (e) interpersonal service encounters. These conditions are interpreted through visitors' emotional and evaluative responses. The framework is consistent with research that conceptualises experience as a relationship between destination stimuli, visitors' internal responses, and subsequent behavioural or evaluative outcomes (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021).

Research Method

Research design

The study is framed as an interpretive qualitative analysis of publicly available user-generated content, informed by netnographic principles. Netnography adapts ethnographic inquiry to digitally mediated social interaction and requires attention to platform context, community practices, researcher interpretation, and online research ethics (Kozinets, 2002, 2015, 2020). The study combines qualitative content analysis to organise explicit review content with inductive thematic analysis to interpret recurring patterns of meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Data source and corpus

This manuscript presents a corpus consisting of 207 TripAdvisor reviews for Pura Agung Narmada/Taman Narmada. The breakdown of reviews by rating is as follows: 5 one-star reviews, 11 two-star reviews, 75 three-star reviews, 81 four-star reviews, and 35 five-star reviews. The manuscript records an overall average rating of 3.6. The reviews span the period from February 15, 2007, to December 27, 2024, and the data were extracted using Tripadvisor® Reviews Scraper 2.0.2 (Scraper.Plus) on January 22, 2025.

Unit of analysis and analytical procedure

The unit of analysis is an individual review, while coding is conducted on meaning units (phrases, clauses, or sentences conveying a coherent experiential idea). Ratings are treated as contextual evaluative markers rather than as qualitative codes. The reported procedure involves repeated reading, inductive coding, grouping of similar codes into categories, development and review of themes, and definition of final themes. Voyant Tools was used to produce word clouds and collocate graphs as exploratory visualisations. These visualisations are treated as descriptive aids and not as independent evidence of thematic validity.

The analysis is organised by rating category to examine how the same destination attributes are evaluated differently. This comparative strategy enables the interpretation of appreciation, ambivalence, and dissatisfaction. The six themes reported in the source manuscript are retained: (1) cultural, historical, and spiritual meanings; (2) physical environment and aesthetics; (3) supporting facilities and attractions; (4) destination management and governance; (5) social interaction and service; and (6) emotional and evaluative experience.

Trustworthiness and research ethics

The source manuscript states that credibility was supported through repeated engagement with the corpus, investigator triangulation, and the use of review excerpts; dependability and confirmability were addressed through an audit trail; and transferability was supported through contextual description. For a journal submission, the authors should provide concrete evidence for these procedures: number and roles of coders, how disagreements were resolved, whether a codebook was maintained, and whether quotations were checked against the original-language reviews. These criteria are commonly used to assess qualitative trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Although TripAdvisor reviews are publicly accessible, public availability does not remove ethical responsibilities. The final manuscript should state whether usernames and other identifying details were excluded, how quotations were selected and translated, and whether the relevant

institutional ethics guidance was consulted. No ethics approval number is supplied in the source manuscript; therefore, none is inserted here. Authors should report the applicable institutional determination accurately.

Results

Rating profile and the limits of aggregate evaluation

The 207-review corpus contains 35 five-star, 81 four-star, 75 three-star, 11 two-star, and five one-star reviews. The concentration of reviews at three and four stars indicates that visitors often recognise the destination's value while expressing reservations about the quality or consistency of delivery. The mean rating of 3.6 is therefore best interpreted as a summary of mixed evaluations, not as a direct measure of the quality of every visitor experience.

Six dimensions of visitor experience

Cultural, historical, and spiritual meaning

Across high-rating reviews, visitors describe Taman Narmada as a meaningful heritage setting associated with the historical legacy of the Karangasem kingdom, Hindu religious practice, symbolic representations of Mount Rinjani and Segara Anak, and sacred springs. These accounts indicate that cultural and spiritual meaning is a major source of destination value. In the four-star narratives, visitors continue to appreciate the site's history but sometimes describe the experience as observational or insufficiently interpreted. In lower-rated reviews, the cultural significance is acknowledged but does not compensate for restricted access, limited interpretation, or perceived ambiguity about the relationship between sacred and recreational functions. The managerial issue is therefore not simply whether heritage exists, but whether its meaning is communicated appropriately and respectfully.

Physical environment and aesthetics

The physical environment is a strong source of appreciation in five- and four-star reviews. Greenery, water features, gardens, tranquility, and visual beauty contribute to relaxation and a sense of place. However, three-, two-, and one-star reviews repeatedly mention poor maintenance, weeds, dirty pools, rubbish, faded colours, and a discrepancy between promotional images and the site encountered. These accounts suggest that landscape aesthetics are not a self-sustaining asset: their value depends on routine maintenance and environmental management. The same physical setting can therefore be interpreted as restorative when maintained and disappointing when neglected.

Supporting facilities and attractions

Reviews refer to swimming pools, flying fox activities, food stalls, souvenir outlets, fish ponds, and a small museum. Some visitors appreciate these facilities as additions for families and recreational visitors. Others perceive them as poorly maintained, separately charged, or conceptually inconsistent with the site's historical and sacred identity. The pattern suggests that adding attractions does not automatically increase experiential value. Supporting facilities need to be compatible with the destination's heritage narrative, adequately maintained, and clearly distinguished from sacred areas.

Destination management and governance

Management and governance emerge as recurring sources of dissatisfaction, especially in three-, two-, and one-star reviews. Visitors mention inconsistent maintenance, insufficient

interpretive information, unclear or perceived-unfair fee arrangements, weak regulation of vendors and guides, and a lack of visible management structure. Some high-rating visitors tolerate these shortcomings because they value the site's intrinsic heritage and landscape attributes. Such tolerance, however, should not be interpreted as evidence that operational weaknesses are unimportant. Rather, the reviews show that strong core attractions can temporarily offset service failures without eliminating them.

Social interaction and service

Human interactions contribute positively when staff and guides are friendly, knowledgeable, and able to explain the site's history. Conversely, some reviews describe unsolicited guiding, persistent selling, begging, or other interactions perceived as intrusive or uncomfortable. These accounts indicate that social interaction is part of the destination's servicescape and requires clear service standards. Management should distinguish between legitimate local livelihood opportunities and practices that visitors experience as coercive or disruptive.

Emotional and evaluative responses

Five-star reviews commonly express admiration, tranquility, enjoyment, and recommendation intentions. Four-star reviews convey appreciation with reservations: visitors value the destination but identify improvements that would make the experience more complete. Three-star reviews are often ambivalent, describing the site as worth visiting but not especially memorable. Two- and one-star reviews express disappointment, boredom, regret, or explicit advice against visiting. These emotional responses are not independent themes; they are the evaluative outcomes through which visitors integrate heritage meaning, physical conditions, management, and social encounters.

Cross-rating synthesis

The comparison across ratings reveals a consistent asymmetry. Heritage meaning and landscape aesthetics are the principal sources of positive appraisal, whereas maintenance, governance, interpretation, service consistency, and social interaction are recurring sources of dissatisfaction. The distinction is not absolute: some visitors value recreational facilities, while others regard them as intrusive; some visitors appreciate guides, while others report unwanted approaches. This variation indicates that visitor segments may hold different expectations and that management must provide clear information and differentiated experiences without compromising the site's cultural integrity.

Discussion

The findings extend experience-oriented destination management by demonstrating that a destination's symbolic and aesthetic assets do not independently secure positive evaluations. Heritage meaning provides a distinctive experiential foundation, but the visitor's judgement is also shaped by the quality of the physical and social environment. This is consistent with heritage research that identifies authenticity, interpretation, and cultural values as central to visitor experience (Gursoy et al., 2022; Park et al., 2019; Seyfi et al., 2020). The present analysis adds a managerial qualification: these assets must be supported by operational reliability.

The coexistence of appreciation and criticism is important. A three- or four-star review may not indicate a uniformly moderate experience; it can represent a visitor who values the heritage resource but considers the service delivery incomplete. This helps explain why aggregate ratings

can conceal distinct satisfiers and dissatisfiers. The pattern is compatible with the broader service-management argument that the core product and the surrounding service environment jointly shape customer evaluations (Bitner, 1992; Parasuraman et al., 1988). For Taman Narmada, the core product is not simply a garden or recreational park; it is a historically and religiously meaningful place whose interpretation and physical care are integral to its value.

The findings also contribute to research on memorable tourism experience. Memorable experiences are often discussed in terms of positive affect, novelty, learning, and meaningfulness (Kim et al., 2012; Hosany et al., 2022). Yet the Taman Narmada reviews show that the absence of basic service conditions can prevent these higher-order experiences from emerging. Visitors may appreciate historical meaning but remain unable to form a memorable connection when the site is poorly maintained, information is limited, or interactions are uncomfortable. This supports a more balanced understanding of experience that includes negative and ambivalent evaluations.

From a digital-marketing perspective, the reviews constitute a form of public feedback that can influence destination image and prospective visitor decisions. eWOM research demonstrates that online reviews affect consumer evaluations and behavioural intentions (Litvin et al., 2008; Filieri & McLeay, 2014; Qiu & Zhang, 2024). Consequently, the managerial response should not focus only on increasing positive ratings or encouraging more reviews. It should identify recurring operational issues, document corrective action, and communicate transparently with visitors. Review monitoring becomes useful when it is connected to service improvement rather than treated as a reputation-management exercise alone.

Implications

First, establish a routine maintenance and cleanliness system with clear responsibilities, inspection frequency, and escalation procedures. The repeated references to rubbish, weeds, dirty pools, and deteriorating visual conditions suggest that basic maintenance is a priority rather than a peripheral improvement.

Second, develop a heritage interpretation strategy. Multilingual signage, concise historical narratives, maps, QR-based interpretation, and trained guides can help visitors understand the site’s history and sacred significance. Interpretation should be accurate, culturally sensitive, and designed in consultation with relevant custodians and local stakeholders.

Third, clarify spatial zoning and the relationship between sacred and recreational functions. Visitors should be informed about access restrictions, appropriate conduct, and the location of recreational facilities. This can reduce expectation gaps while protecting religious practice and heritage integrity.

Fourth, standardise service encounters. Guide accreditation or orientation, transparent fee information, visitor assistance protocols, and a code of conduct for vendors can reduce intrusive interactions while preserving fair opportunities for local participation.

Fifth, establish a review-response and service-recovery process. Management should classify reviews by issue, monitor recurring complaints, record corrective actions, and respond professionally where appropriate. The purpose should be organisational learning and service improvement, not manipulation of ratings.

Conclusion

This study examined 207 TripAdvisor reviews of Pura Agung (Taman) Narmada and identified six interrelated dimensions of visitor experience. The central conclusion is that heritage meaning and landscape aesthetics are necessary sources of destination value but are insufficient to ensure consistently positive evaluations. Visitors' assessments also depend on maintenance, supporting facilities, interpretation, governance, pricing transparency, and social interaction. The rating profile and review narratives reveal a destination whose intrinsic assets are appreciated but whose operational delivery is experienced inconsistently.

The study contributes to destination-management research by explaining how appreciation, ambivalence, and dissatisfaction coexist within the same heritage setting. Its practical implication is that management should protect the site's cultural and spiritual identity while strengthening the operational systems that make that identity accessible and meaningful to visitors. Future research could compare multiple platforms, incorporate interviews with visitors and site managers, and examine changes in review themes after documented management interventions.

Limitations and Future Research

The findings are limited to self-selected TripAdvisor contributors and should not be generalised statistically to all visitors. The analysis covers one destination and one platform, and reviews may reflect differences in visitor motivation, language, travel period, and expectations. Translation may also affect nuance. The study is retrospective and does not establish causal relationships between management interventions and visitor ratings. Future research should triangulate platform reviews with interviews, observation, visitor surveys, and management records; compare platforms; and investigate temporal patterns only after establishing a verified extraction history.

CRediT Author Statement

Author contributions to this research: **Sri Maryanti:** Conceptualization; Methodology; Formal analysis; Investigation; Writing – original draft; Writing – review & editing. **Febrian Humaidi Sukmana:** Methodology; Data curation; Formal analysis; Writing – review & editing. **Nila Rahayu:** Investigation; Data curation; Validation; Writing – review & editing.

Declarations

Ethics approval: The source manuscript does not include an ethics approval number or an official determination from an institution.

Informed consent: Not applicable to the analysis of publicly accessible online reviews, subject to the relevant institutional and journal ethics requirements.

Data availability: The review corpus was collected from TripAdvisor. The authors should state whether the extracted review data can be shared, subject to platform terms of use and applicable data-protection requirements.

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